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About the Author

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Abstract

Since the unrest in Mali in 2012, the European Union (EU) has become heavily engaged in the stability of the country, where today two Common Security and Defence Policy missions and a range of EU security, development and governance tools are deployed. This commitment, combined with the deep-seated security problems in Mali, necessitates using various EU instruments coherently, particularly in light of the so-called integrated approach in the EU Global Strategy. This paper explores how effective the EU has been in acting cohesively and strategically, taking an 'integrated approach' to conflict. It assesses the EU's integrated approach in Mali through three lenses: civil-military synergies, the security-development nexus and a 'multi-phased' approach. It argues that meaningful synergies are being created, particularly between security and development actions. However, amalgamating EU tools through innovations such as the Programme of support for enhanced security in the Mopti and Gao regions and for the management of border areas (PARSEC) and operational actions under Article 28 TEU has become an end in itself – a 'laboratory of experimentation' for the EU – rather than a means to tackle underlying instability in Mali. This is not what the integrated approach aims to achieve and there is instead a focus on implementing *ad hoc* programmes without a long-term plan for the future of the country, behind which all EU tools can unite. This is damaging not just for Mali but for the EU's credibility as a global security actor.

Introduction

For nearly a decade, the European Union (EU) has become heavily invested in the security of Mali. Since the uprising following the 2012 coup, the EU has operationalised nearly every available security and development tool. As one EU official expressed: “We have every single instrument in motion in Mali. Every time there is a new initiative, a new idea, we always pick Mali.”¹ There is one military and one civilian Common Security and Defence (CSDP) mission in the country, 14 projects funded by the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) and 12 projects of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) worth over €209.5 million, alongside other European Development Fund (EDF) funds.² There is an EU Special Representative (EUSR) to the Sahel who focuses to a great extent on Mali, and the country also hosts an Article 28 TEU ‘stabilisation action’. This action, with a legal basis in the TEU, was implemented in the Mopti and Segou regions in 2017 and deployed a team of experts to help the Malian authorities re-establish security and governance reform.

Yet in utilising such a range of instruments, it must be asked how effective the EU has been in acting cohesively and strategically, and in what ways it has thus taken an ‘integrated approach’ to conflict. This is the question this paper explores. It finds that the EU has made crucial institutional innovations to integrate its crisis management instruments in Mali, creating new synergies particularly between security and development tools. Nevertheless, these synergies do not reflect the full ambition of the integrated approach in the EU Global Strategy (EUGS).³ While EU action in Mali is becoming more integrated in its operational procedures, the EU is failing both to articulate a long-term strategy for Mali’s future and, consequently, to have a clear impact. The process of amalgamating EU external action tools has become an end in itself – a ‘laboratory of experimentation’ for EU crisis management – rather than means to tackle instability in Mali.⁴

¹ Interview with EU official 1, Brussels, 8 March 2019.

² “Mali”, *EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa*, retrieved 12 April 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/sahel-lake-chad/mali>.

³ European Union, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe: A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign And Security Policy*, Brussels, June 2016.

⁴ B. Venturi, “The EU and the Sahel: A Laboratory of Experimentation for the Security–Migration–Development Nexus”, *IAI Working Papers*, no. 38, Rome, Istituto Affari Internazionali, December 2017.

A central question is thus how to measure the success of the EU in implementing the integrated approach. There are two ways to do so, based on the concept's development. The first criterion is the extent to which the EU's tools and instruments have become more integrated, overcoming sectoral silos to produce outcomes of added value. This examines the operational side, where the EU has been most successful and real institutional innovations have been made, such as staff of the Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) and of the CSDP missions working together on projects. However, a second, more stringent criterion measures the EU's success against its substantive aims. The integrated approach is a means to set higher ambitions for EU crisis management. This criterion thus assesses whether the integration of tools has enabled the EU to become more strategic as an actor, mobilising all of its instruments and tools to achieve long-term stability in a country or region. This is where this paper finds that the EU has not been so successful, indeed many EU actors in Mali have seen fulfilling the first criterion as an end in itself.

These findings underline an important distinction underappreciated in the literature. Lopez Lucia has argued that scholars tend to focus only on the operational, rather than the 'political' aspects of the previous comprehensive approach.⁵ In this sense, the comprehensive approach and the Sahel Strategy are more than just action plans, but ways of "performing the international agency of the EU".⁶ Lopez Lucia touches on a crucial problem in EU external action; often the EU prioritises its operational unity as a crisis manager, neglecting longer-term goals of achieving peace or stability. This problem recurred in the interviews conducted for this study.

This paper will first operationalise the integrated approach conceptually and justify its significance in Mali, before putting three key aspects of the integrated approach under the microscope. The first section will explore EU civil-military synergies, the second section will analyse the success of the security-development nexus, and the final section will examine the 'multi-phased' aspect of the integrated approach which aims to synchronise action at all stages of the conflict cycle. The conclusions explore lessons the EU can draw from its experience in Mali as a global security actor.

⁵ E. Lopez Lucia, "Performing EU Agency by Experimenting the 'Comprehensive Approach': The European Union Sahel Strategy", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2017, p. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Framework of analysis: Integrating ambition

The term 'integrated approach' is not new. It has been used in relation to United Nations 'integrated missions' which place all political, humanitarian, security and development action under one mission structure.⁷ This same aim was reflected in the EU's comprehensive approach, articulated in a 2013 Joint Communication which states: "comprehensiveness refers not only to the joined-up deployment of EU instruments and resources but also to the shared responsibility of EU-level actors and member states".⁸ Yet the 'integrated approach' was not introduced in the EU until the 2016 EUGS, when the comprehensive approach was broadened:

Implementing the 'comprehensive approach to conflicts and crises' through a coherent use of all policies at the EU's disposal is essential. But the meaning and scope of the 'comprehensive approach' will be expanded.⁹

In what way was the comprehensive approach expanded? When Federica Mogherini became High Representative (HR/VP), she increased the ambitions for the EU as a strategic actor.¹⁰ The underlying aim of the EUGS, which birthed the integrated approach, was to unite all spheres of EU action under common aims, mitigating previous, sectorally siloed thinking: "shared vision, common action".¹¹ The EUGS aspired for the EU to become more effective as a crisis manager, less "reactive and events-driven", and to prioritise areas where it could improve long-term stability.¹²

Reflecting this, the integrated approach is more ambitious than the comprehensive approach in three ways. First, the integrated approach works towards creating *active synergies* between EU tools, not simply the division of labour. This particularly concerns synergies between EU security and development instruments and civil and military actions. Synergies mean more than just improved coordination and coherence, but creating results that could not have been achieved had both

⁷ T. Tardy, "The EU: From Comprehensive Vision to Integrated Action", *Issue Brief*, no. 5, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, February 2017, p. 2.

⁸ European Commission & High Representative, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Conflicts and Crises*, JOIN(2013) 30, Brussels, 11 December 2013, p. 3.

⁹ European Union, *Shared Vision, Common Action*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁰ N. Tocci, "Towards an EU Global Strategy", in A. Missiroli (ed.), *Towards an EU Global Strategy: Background, Process, References*, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, September 2015, p. 115.

¹¹ European Union, *Shared Vision, Common Action*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

actors worked separately. In contrast, the comprehensive approach was less ambitious. The Joint Communication emphasises the need to use “in a coherent manner, different tools and instruments *within their own mandates and decision-making processes*”.¹³ The CSDP actions were framed as short-term tools and development tools as long-term.¹⁴ Yet the integrated approach abolished the siloed long-term/short-term distinction of security/development instruments.¹⁵

Second, the integrated approach aims to expand the EU’s role and establish its presence as a security actor at all stages of a conflict. While a need for the EU to focus more on the prevention stage was highlighted in 2013, it became an indispensable element of the integrated approach. Over half of the 2018 Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach were dedicated to integrating EU action throughout the various phases of a conflict.¹⁶ As mentioned, the distinction between short-term ‘security’ tools and long-term ‘development’ tools disappeared in favour of integrating all tools at all stages.

Building on these expansions, a third shift was the increased ambition for the integrated approach to make the EU a more effective, strategic security actor with an overarching direction to guide action at all conflict phases.¹⁷ A 2018 EEAS working paper shows this:

The EU integrated approach is a new way of working which aims at setting a clear overarching EU political objective which can be achieved by using and combining the different tools at our disposal.¹⁸

Table 1 illustrates this shift from ‘comprehensive’ to ‘integrated’.

¹³ European Commission & High Representative, *Joint Communication*, *op. cit.*, p. 8 [emphasis added].

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises*, Brussels, 22 January 2018, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Tardy, “The EU”, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁸ European External Action Service, “The EU Integrated Approach in the Sahel”, *EEAS Working Paper*, Brussels, 8 February 2018, p. 2.

Table 1: The EU's conceptual shift in approach to managing fragile conflict areas

	Comprehensive approach	Integrated approach
<i>How do different instruments work together?</i>	Division of labour Specialisation of instruments by task	All tools working together in all areas at all stages, towards a unified goal
<i>What is the aspired outcome?</i>	Instruments are 'joined up' and coordinated, avoiding duplication	Instruments combining to producing an outcome of added value
<i>EU external action should be more...?</i>	Coherent	Strategic

Given that this conceptual transition is comparatively recent, the number of conflict zones where this approach has been put into practice is limited, which makes Mali particularly important as an example.

Case selection

Mali is an ideal case study to evaluate the EU's integrated approach in a third country since there is maximum EU engagement in the sphere of crisis management. First, due to the number of instruments operationalised, it has the potential to indicate the kinds of problems the EU may face when engaging many different instruments in a single conflict zone in the future. As highlighted earlier, there are two CSDP missions in Mali, one military, the European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Mali which began in February 2013, and one civilian, the European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Sahel Mali which began in April 2014. Nearly every EU financial instrument is in use, from 14 IcSP projects to the EDF and the African Peace Facility (APF) to 12 national EUTF projects worth over €209.5 million.¹⁹ The EU remains the largest donor to Mali where member states and the EU together provide around €660 million per year.²⁰ A team of experts have been deployed to stabilise Mali under Article 28 TEU and there is a EUSR to the Sahel who focuses to a significant extent on Mali.

Second, Mali is also a relevant case study for the integrated approach because of conditions on the ground; there is a pressing need for the EU to take an

¹⁹ "Mali", *EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa*, retrieved 12 April 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/sahel-lake-chad/mali>.

²⁰ "The European Union and the Sahel, Fact Sheet", European External Action Service, 2 June 2017, retrieved 5 April 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/4099/european-union-and-sahel-fact-sheet_en.

integrated approach in responding to instability in Mali. On the one hand, the violence in Mali is deep-rooted, touching on all aspects of society.²¹ Terrorism, drug smuggling and human trafficking are symptoms of entrenched problems, and for the EU to act effectively in creating lasting stability it needs to devise a long-term strategy integrating security, development and governance. On the other hand, an integrated approach is also necessary due to strong member state interests. Mali is relevant as a 'country of origin' – Malians frequently cross into France and Italy.²² France has also made extensive counterterrorism efforts through Operation Barkhane. Due to these factors, Mali has long been a focus of attempts to articulate a strategy to bring these interests together. The 2011 Sahel Strategy was the first such attempt at a comprehensive approach, a new way to integrate security, governance and development in the region.²³ Four years later, the Sahel Regional Action Plan 2015-2020 built on these aims. Thus, not only is Mali home to the highest number of operational EU external peace and security tools, but it is also the country with the EU's longest-standing commitment to achieving an integrated approach.

The success of the EU in implementing an integrated approach will be assessed in the following sections through civil-military synergies, the security-development nexus and the EU's multi-phased action throughout the conflict cycle in Mali. These are the three key areas where there are significant gaps between different siloes of the EU external crisis management architecture in terms of organisational cultures, priorities and institutional procedures. Furthermore, these three aspects have been identified by the EU, in strategic documents, as areas that the integrated approach should target.

Civil-military synergies and CSDP missions: Integrated capacity building in Mali

The first element to examine is the foundation of EU integrated action in Mali: civil-military coordination between EUCAP Sahel Mali and the EU Delegation on the civilian side and EUTM Mali on the military side. Civil-military relations were highlighted in the comprehensive approach as based on information sharing and coordination to avoid

²¹ "Drug Trafficking, Violence and Politics in Northern Mali", International Crisis Group, Report, no. 267, 13 December 2018, retrieved 24 April 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/267-narcotrafic-violence-et-politique-au-nord-du-mali>.

²² European Commission, *Migration Profile: Mali, end 2016*, Brussels, 2017.

²³ D. Helly & G. Galeazzi, "Avant la Lettre? The EU's Comprehensive Approach to Crises in the Sahel", *Briefing Note*, no. 75, Maastricht, ECDPM, February 2015, p. 2.

duplication.²⁴ However, the integrated approach, as Lintern argues, is more ambitious.²⁵ The EUGS expanded the meaning of civil-military synergies from coordination to “a single external policy”.²⁶ Civilian and military missions thus become a subset of overall EU foreign policy which necessitates working together on jointly-produced outcomes.²⁷

The civilian and military CSDP missions in Mali both aim to improve the Malian authorities’ capacity in the security sector, yet barriers to coordination can be substantial.²⁸ While EUTM Mali focuses on developing the Malian Armed Forces, EUCAP Sahel Mali concentrates on the reform of internal security forces. However, to maximise their impact, both missions need to work together, and with the EU Delegation, toward common goals. Yet the contrasting organisational cultures of these actors is the main obstacle to meaningful EU civil-military synergies. Civilian CSDP missions are police, judicial staff and gendarmes. The EU Delegation is comprised of civil servants who coordinate development projects and conduct diplomacy. Military CSDP missions work with national chains of command. Bridging this gap to create added value is thus particularly challenging.

The informal mechanisms of cooperation between EUTM Mali, EUCAP Sahel Mali and the EU Delegation are strong. The political advisors (PolAds) to the Heads of the CSDP missions, the Head of Delegation and to the EUSR are key bridging actors. PolAds are mandated to report to the Heads of Mission and offer guidance on the overall direction of the mission, using their detailed knowledge of the strategic situation on the ground. The EU has expanded training courses allowing civilian and military political advisors to create networks that facilitate the sharing of information.²⁹ PolAds help create trust between different siloes of EU action, given that mutual suspicion can pose a key obstacle to civil-military relations. Vogelaar has highlighted

²⁴ S. Jayasundara-Smits, “Civil-Military Synergy at Operational Level in EU External Action”, *Best Practices Report: Civil-Military Synergies*, Deliverable 4.11, WOSCAP, 30 November 2016, p. 4.

²⁵ S. Lintern, “What Civilian-Military Synergies?”, in T. Tardy (ed.), *Recasting EU Civilian Crisis Management*, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, 2017, pp. 35-40.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁸ G. Vogelaar, “Local Ownership, Inclusivity and Civil-Military Synergy in EU External Action: The Case of EU Support to Security Sector Reforms in Mali”, *Journal of Regional Security*, ResearchGate, 2018, p. 1.

²⁹ “ESDC: Training for Political Advisors”, European Union External Action Service, 23 February 2017, retrieved 4 April 2019, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/\\$21285/ESDC:%20training%20for%20Political%20Advisors](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/$21285/ESDC:%20training%20for%20Political%20Advisors).

the obstacle of mistrust posed to information sharing between civilian and military actors; not knowing “how information will be used, what information is collected and how”.³⁰ Interviewees for this study, in contrast, highlighted the frequency of interaction and trust built between PolAds in the CSDP missions in Mali and the EU Delegation.³¹ On a weekly basis PolAds coordinate on their respective objectives for the week and their key challenges.³²

Formal synergies between the two CSDP missions and between EUTM Mali and the EU Delegation have also grown. Interviewees highlighted the EUTF frontier projects as the best example of formal civil-military synergies. Notably, the €29 million Programme of support for enhanced security in the Mopti and Gao regions and for the management of border areas (PARSEC) programme is a concrete example of civil-military synergies on the ground.³³ It is one of the largest EUTF programmes in Mali and draws on the advice of personnel from both CSDP missions, the EU Delegation and Expertise France, a French public agency which supports the EU in the implementation of their development policies at the technical level.³⁴ PARSEC was set up to train internal security forces and construct infrastructure to improve security in central Mali after instability in 2015, as well as helping the Malian government manage security in border areas.³⁵ It drew on the respective strengths of civil and military partners. For instance, EUTM Mali coordinated the operation of PARSEC’s aerial border surveillance contribution above the Niger river.³⁶

More generally, interviewees identified the EUTF as a key area where civilian and military actors are building synergies in Mali. Yet the ways in which they help the EU meet its goal of stabilising Mali in the long term, or their strategic impact, has been limited. This is partly due to limitations within the CSDP missions themselves but also due

³⁰ Vogelaar, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

³¹ Interview with a former EU advisor, Geneva, 5 March 2019, interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019.

³² Interview with a former EU advisor, Geneva, 5 March 2019.

³³ “Document d’action du Fonds Fiduciaire de l’UE à utiliser pour les décisions du comité de gestion”, retrieved 26 April 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/t05-eutf-sah-mi-06.pdf>, p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁵ “PARSEC : contribuer au renforcement de la sécurité et de la gestion des frontières au Mali”, *Expertise France*, 21 March 2019, retrieved 4 May 2019, <https://www.expertisefrance.fr/fiche-projet?id=404281>.

³⁶ “La surveillance aérienne dans la cadre du programme PARSEC au centre du Mali”, *EUTM Mali*, 3 April 2019, retrieved 29 April 2019, <http://www.eutmmali.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/NWSL0917-A3-FR-2.pdf>, p. 2.

to the lack of a clear set of long-term goals for security and development tools to work towards. Cooperation largely takes place on an *ad hoc* basis via short-term migration-focused projects.

Structural limitations on civil-military synergies

There are key shortcomings internally within EUTM Mali, EUCAP Sahel Mali and the EU Delegation that limit the impact of civil-military synergies on the long-term reform of the Malian security sector. First, the EUTM Mali commander's tenure is only six months, making it difficult to create long-term synergies. Interviewees described the disorientation of generals from EU member states upon their arrival in Mali.³⁷ Within their six-month rotation, it could take three months for personnel to adapt to the EUTM environment before even considering how coordination with actors such as the EU Delegation might be improved.³⁸ This made the creation of civil-military synergies and EUCAP-EU Delegation-EUTM relationships reliant on an informal network of PoIAds.

Second, regarding EUCAP Sahel Mali, staff are mostly seconded from national administrations of EU member states. These personnel do not stay more than two years and there are often issues with human resources management, which the EU has recognised as a fundamental problem for civilian missions: member states often do not send staff with the right skills for the mission.³⁹ As one interviewee phrased it: "we get the pre-retirees or the bad apples".⁴⁰ EUCAP Sahel Mali staff tended to have specific knowledge of a narrow area such as the gendarmes but cannot see the bigger picture.⁴¹ As a result, they have been criticised for giving advice that is often technical rather than strategic.⁴² Consequently, EUCAP Sahel Mali increasingly focused on implementing small projects rather than forging links with other actors. Given the difficulty of Security Sector Reform (SSR) and the length of time it takes to

³⁷ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019; interview with a former EU advisor, Geneva, 5 March 2019.

³⁸ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019.

³⁹ European Parliament, Sub-Committee on Security and Defence (SEDE), A. Creta, A. di Martino, M. Nemedi & P. Taitto (rapporteurs), *Civilian and Military Personnel in CSDP Missions and Operations*, EP/EXPO/B/SEDE/2016/02, Brussels, 16 February 2017, p. 16.

⁴⁰ Interview, former EU advisor, Geneva, 5 March 2019.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² A. Lebovich, "Halting Ambition: EU Migration and Security Policy in the Sahel", *ECFR Policy Brief*, no. 266, London, European Council on Foreign Relations, September 2018, p. 10.

see results, interviewees stressed that personnel valued executing a short-term project with more tangible outcomes more than working towards long-term reform.⁴³

From the start, the level of strategic ambition in the creation of civil-military synergies was limited by short-term mandates and a projects-based approach in EUCAP Sahel Mali. The EU Delegation suffered from a lack of staff to help implement civil-military synergies.⁴⁴ These structural problems were particularly evident during the implementation of PARSEC, which involved EUTM Mali, EUCAP Sahel Mali and the EU Delegation. Other than the PolAds, personnel in the CSDP missions struggled to see the bigger strategic picture and the importance of these synergies.⁴⁵ PARSEC and EUCAP Sahel Mali began to perceive each other as competitors.⁴⁶ EUCAP Sahel Mali was already over-burdened and did not understand the relevance of EUTF projects to their work.⁴⁷ Consequently during the first two years of PARSEC, Expertise France, which implemented the project, was unable to draw on the expertise from either of the CSDP missions, which led to complaints from the Malians that this was affecting the impact of the project on the ground.⁴⁸

PARSEC: An ad-hoc projects approach to civil-military synergies?

Thus, despite being able to facilitate powerful new civil-military synergies, PARSEC was intrinsically limited in strategic ambition as an 'emergency'-focused project. Despite the project having been given the green light in 2016, it can claim few concrete achievements. First, the Malians were disappointed with the progress of PARSEC and complained directly to Brussels.⁴⁹ The still unstable security situation in the centre of the country made communication with the Malian authorities difficult and meant that European trainers on the programme had to be removed from the area.⁵⁰ PARSEC was mobilised without taking into account conditions on the ground.⁵¹ Second, as an EUTF programme, PARSEC is not 'integrated' in that it stands outside CSDP frameworks

⁴³ Interview with a former EU advisor, Geneva, 5 March 2019.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ E. Lopez Lucia, "The European Union Integrated Approach Towards the Sahel", Centre FrancoPaix en résolution des conflits et missions de paix, Québec, Chaire Raoul-Dandurand en études stratégiques et diplomatiques Université du Québec à Montréal, February 2019, p. 40.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 37-38.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

and long-term development instruments. The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa itself contains the word 'emergency' in its name; it does not have long-term ambitions.⁵² It arose from the 2015 Valetta Summit, which intended to tackle the causes of migration from countries of origin.⁵³ PARSEC is limited geographically to Mali's Mopti and Gao regions. Substantively, it has a mandate focused on border management and preventing trafficking rather than long-term good-governance goals.⁵⁴ Border surveillance hardly tackles the structural problems at the root of violence. The EUTF mixes short-term security actions like border management and long-term human security and development goals. However, this mixture makes PARSEC a standalone programme tackling the symptoms (such as trafficking) not the causes of fragility.

Overall, valuable civil-military synergies have been created, notably through PARSEC that draws personnel from EUTM Mali, EUCAP Sahel Mali and the EU Delegation under the EUTF umbrella. However, intra-EU civil-military synergies have been limited in scope due to structural limitations on CSDP missions and the *ad hoc* nature of PARSEC as a response to the 'migration crisis'. This highlights a crucial problem: synergies at the operational level are seen by many as ends in themselves. Interviewees were surprisingly relaxed about the extent to which projects such as PARSEC succeeded.⁵⁵ There was a greater focus on how well this programme presented the EU as a united front for the Malians, and to gain the EU the "political leverage that we needed at the [Malian] Ministry of Security".⁵⁶ There was little consideration for the lack of an integrated long-term goal towards which civilian and military actors should work, or tackling the roots of instability as the EU promised.

Civil-military synergies form the most basic tenets of the EU's integrated approach to conflict. Yet another significant sectoral gulf has long existed between the EU's security and development instruments, each with their own organisational culture and practices.

⁵² Conversation with a policy expert via telephone, 4 April 2019.

⁵³ European Commission, *The European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing Root Causes of Irregular Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa: Strategic Orientation Document*, Brussels, 16 February 2016, p. 1.

⁵⁴ "Programme of support for enhanced security in the Mopti and Gao regions and for the management of border areas (PARSEC Mopti-Gao)", European Commission, retrieved 21 April 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/programme-support-enhanced-security-mopti-and-gao-regions-and-management-border-areas_en.

⁵⁵ Interview with a former EU advisor, Geneva, 5 March 2019; interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

The security-development nexus

Merging security and development elements of external action is crucial to the EU's integrated approach.⁵⁷ The nexus between EU security and development actors, especially DG DEVCO, pushes the EU to act in a more cohesive way and integrates the Commission into the security domain. In Mali, the nexus relates to securitising development instruments like the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the EDF which funds security-related programmes such as the APF. The IcSP is also used to help stabilise war-torn countries and through Article 3 it contributes to short-term stabilisation activities.⁵⁸ EUTF development programmes play an equally crucial role.

The 2005 European Consensus on Development, as well as its updated 2017 version, articulated the need for a security-development nexus: "Without peace and security development and poverty eradication are not possible, and without development and poverty eradication no sustainable peace will occur."⁵⁹ There is a clear internal logic to this nexus within the EU: it is not motivated only by needs on the ground, but it is a continuation of integrated thinking in EU external action. Merging security and development became an integral part of the comprehensive approach: "the connection between security and development is therefore an underlying principle in [...] an EU comprehensive approach".⁶⁰ The nexus underpins the integrated approach since it involves the integration of previously separate tools with separate decision-making mechanisms to achieve an overarching aim, as stipulated in the EUGS: "Through CSDP, development, and dedicated financial instruments, we will blend top-down and bottom-up efforts fostering the building blocks of sustainable statehood rooted in local agency."⁶¹

Qualified success? The security-development nexus in Mali since 2011

Undeniably, a significant shift has taken place concerning the security-development nexus in Mali. Particularly according to the first criteria of success set out in this paper,

⁵⁷ Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises*, Brussels, 22 January 2018, p. 4.

⁵⁸ T. Tardy. "The New Forms of Civilian Crisis Management", in T. Tardy (ed.), *Recasting EU Civilian Crisis Management*, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, 2017, p. 15.

⁵⁹ European Parliament, European Council & European Commission, "The European Consensus on Development' (2006/C 46/01)", Brussels, 24 February 2006, p. 7.

⁶⁰ European Commission & High Representative, *Joint Communication*, op. cit., p. 4.

⁶¹ European Union, *Shared Vision, Common Action*, op. cit., p. 31.

the extent to which the EU's tools have become more integrated, overcoming sectoral silos to produce outcomes of added value, the EU has had significant success through the security-development nexus. The roles of DG DEVCO and the EU Delegation have altered drastically since their initial engagement in 2013, and especially since the 2011 Sahel Strategy. EU action in Mali was initially focused on 'traditional' forms of development assistance.⁶² The only security-related projects the EU had funded through development tools before 2011 were projects on human trafficking through the Instrument for Stability (IfS, now the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace IcSP) and the EDF's funding of the security architecture of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).⁶³ The Sahel Strategy was an important step. As Lopez Lucia argues, it was an experiment in creating a "'real' foreign policy strategy, mixing instruments and driven by the EU's strategic interests".⁶⁴ It featured four lines of action under one structure (development, security, political and military), announcing that "security and development in the Sahel cannot be separated".⁶⁵

In 2015, the security-development nexus in Mali was transformed. First, the security situation in the centre of Mali deteriorated, especially in the Mopti region.⁶⁶ Second, the refugee 'crisis' in Europe drew attention to Mali as a 'country of origin'. As discussed, the EUTF was an outcome of the Valletta Process which could also be deployed quickly to react to the instability in the centre of Mali, whereas the EU had previously focussed on the north.⁶⁷ United around the aim of tackling the causes of migration, the EUTF has brought together actors normally working in different silos to achieve different ends.⁶⁸ For the first time, large quantities of money handled by DG DEVCO were mobilised on security issues.⁶⁹ These efforts involved over €209 million across 12 projects to strengthen state and internal security forces.⁷⁰ Making this

⁶² Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019.

⁶³ Lopez Lucia, "The European Union Integrated Approach", *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁶⁵ European External Action Service, *Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

⁶⁶ A. Tobie, "Central Mali: Violence, Local Perspectives and Diverging Narratives", *SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security*, no. 5, Stockholm, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, December 2017.

⁶⁷ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019.

⁶⁸ D. Kipp, "From Exception to Rule – The EU Trust Fund for Africa", *SWP Research Paper*, no. 13, Berlin, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, December 2018, p. 5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷⁰ Lopez Lucia, "The European Union Integrated Approach", *op. cit.*, p. 23.

instrument work required intense dialogue involving experts in the EU Delegation and DG DEVCO, which was a huge organisational shift.⁷¹ Representatives from DG DEVCO increasingly attended meetings in the EU Delegation on security, which never happened before 2015.⁷² Furthermore, EUTF projects and security-development synergies were supported by EU member states who realised the utility of quickly mobilisable financial instruments in responding to crises.⁷³ Thus, the security-development nexus helped integrate member states as well as EU instruments into EU-wide action in Mali.

The IcSP, with a shorter-term stabilisation mandate in immediate post-conflict environments, also played a part in Mali after 2015. It now funds 12 projects at €30.5 million, which focus on building trust between the Malian state and society.⁷⁴ One of its most prominent programmes, Panorama Corsec, brought together DG DEVCO, the EU Delegation and EUCAP Sahel Mali to improve relations between the population in the centre and internal security forces.⁷⁵ Even the EDF, one of the EU's most 'traditional' development tools, increasingly addressed security concerns: the €615 million provided to Mali puts aside €280 million for reforming the state through structural reforms.⁷⁶ Crucially, the budget support provided under this funding is dependent on indicators linked to progress in SSR, which is the mandate of the CSDP missions.⁷⁷

The change from 2015 to 2017 is best symbolised by the visit of DG DEVCO Director General Stefano Manservigi to Mali to meet with the Chiefs of Staff for the armed forces in Bamako in June 2017.⁷⁸ This was the first time DG DEVCO had attended such a meeting with security officials in a state like Mali.⁷⁹ They discussed progress in the G5

⁷¹ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019, interview with EU official 1 and 2 via telephone, 13 March 2019.

⁷² Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Lopez Lucia, "The European Union Integrated Approach", *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁷⁵ "1e Comité de pilotage du PANORAMA – Corsec", *Délégation de l'Union européenne en République du Mali*, 12 April 2017, retrieved 13 April 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/mali_fr/24629/1e%20Comit%C3%A9%20de%20pilotage%20du%20PANORAMA%20%E2%80%93%20Corsec.

⁷⁶ Union Européenne-Mali, *Programme Indicatif National 2014-2020*, Brussels, 6 March 2015, p. 8.

⁷⁷ Lopez Lucia, "The European Union Integrated Approach", *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁷⁸ S. Manservigi, "In Bamako to support Mali & #G5_Sahel_SP c/ terrorism.Talks w/ gvt but also great music w/ @GroupBwazan #pasdefutursancultur @europeaid", *Twitter*, 3 June 2017, 5:46 p.m., retrieved 2 April 2019, <https://twitter.com/stefanomanservi/status/871166342518505473>

⁷⁹ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019.

Sahel Joint Force and ministries of defence in the region as well as within Mali on how the two could work together.⁸⁰ These meetings continued, for instance in February 2019 when DG DEVCO met with Chiefs of Staff of Sahelian armed forces to coordinate on security issues in the region.⁸¹ In 2016, Lopez Lucia argued that institutional power struggles were taking place between the EEAS, which was willing to integrate all tools into a unified external strategy, and DG DEVCO, which resisted and wanted to keep development apolitical.⁸² Yet this confrontation, at least in Mali, is coming to an end and there is widespread acceptance that security and development tools are inextricably linked. Contacts between DG DEVCO and security personnel in the EU Delegation and CSDP missions were rare before 2015. Yet they now work together on a daily basis.

How strategic is the EUTF?

As highlighted, the EUTF is a key instrument operationalising the security-development nexus. However, it is also a short-term 'emergency' instrument with ambition limited to tackling the causes of migration. Moreover, whilst the EUTF cooperates with CSDP missions, it sits outside the EU's existing security apparatuses which means it does not have to be entirely compliant with the rules of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which are more restrictive on approving security-related development aid programmes.⁸³ While a key advantage of the EUTF is its ability to mobilise considerable sums of money quickly, it does not set clear strategic long-term aims. Thus, against the second, more stringent criterion of 'success' for the integrated approach set out in this paper, whether the integration of tools has enabled the EU to become more strategic as an actor, the EU's security-development nexus' achievements have been limited.

The EUTF programme GAR-SI Sahel is an illustrative example of this. GAR-SI is one of the largest EUTF programmes in Mali that mobilises significant sums of money (€41.6 million across six countries).⁸⁴ DG DEVCO sets its strategic direction, however it

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ M.S. Sidikou, "Ouagadougou, jeudi 28 février: Concertation entre le G5 Sahel et l'Union Européenne sous la présidence du Ministre d'État Chérif Sy (Défense Nationale et Anciens Combattants) et de Stefano Manservigi, DG de la Coopération internationale et du Dev.(@europeaid) à la @EU_Commission", *Twitter*, 28 February 2019, 12:09 p.m., retrieved 23 April 2019, <https://twitter.com/SidikouMaman/status/1101212932996775936>.

⁸² Lopez Lucia, "Performing EU Agency", *op. cit.*, p. 464.

⁸³ Lopez Lucia, "The European Union Integrated Approach", *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁸⁴ Lebovich, "Halting Ambition", *op. cit.*, p. 15.

is implemented by Spanish training forces.⁸⁵ Typically of EUTF projects, its steering committee brings together DG DEVCO, the EEAS, the relevant EU Delegations as well as the member states' security services and other partners.⁸⁶ GAR-SI trains intervention units to improve response capacity at border areas: in Mali they trained Forces Spéciales Anti-terroristes et de Sécurité.⁸⁷ The border forces built up by GAR-SI in Mali sit outside of established EU structures for long-term security. While the strategic document outlining GAR-SI's mandate emphasises the necessity of avoiding duplication with other tools such as CSDP missions, there is no sense that GAR-SI and CSDP missions have integrated strategic aims.⁸⁸ Indeed, interviewees highlighted the separateness of GAR-SI and CSDP missions, perceiving GAR-SI as a stand-alone tool used for border management.⁸⁹ This is hardly the integrated, strategic approach outlined in 2016.

The EUTF's Strategic Board in DG DEVCO set out four "strategic lines of action" for North Africa, the Sahel and Lake Chad, and the Horn of Africa: creating employment opportunities, "strengthening resilience of communities", improving migration management and improving governance to prevent conflict and forced migration.⁹⁰ As of April 2018, six strategic aims for the Sahel and the Horn of Africa were also created: "return and reintegration", "refugees management", "securitization of documents", "anti-trafficking measures", "essential stabilization efforts in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel", and "migration dialogues".⁹¹ Some of these aims are the same as those in the Sahel Strategy, including a commitment to good governance. Yet the EUTF has a shorter-term focus on border management than other EU tools. In this way, the EUTF is a reactive rather than a strategic tool.

Another indicator that the EU's security-development nexus is limited in its strategic impacts is the scale of EU funding for the G5 Sahel Joint Force through the

⁸⁵ "Document d'action du Fonds Fiduciaire de l'UE à utiliser pour les décisions du comité de gestion", retrieved 2 April 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/t05-eutf-sah-reg-04_gar-si_sahel_fiche_daction.pdf, p. 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁸⁷ Lebovich, "Halting Ambition", *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁸⁸ "Document d'action du Fonds Fiduciaire de l'UE à utiliser pour les décisions du comité de gestion", retrieved 2 April 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/t05-eutf-sah-reg-04_gar-si_sahel_fiche_daction.pdf.

⁸⁹ Interview with EU official 1, Brussels, 8 March 2019; interview with EU official 2, Brussels, 8 March 2019.

⁹⁰ European Commission, *The European Union Emergency Trust Fund*, *op. cit.*, pp.12-13.

⁹¹ "Strategy", *EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa*, European Commission, retrieved 20 April 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/homepage_en.

APF. The APF is a long-term tool funded by DG DEVCO to create effective African peace and security architecture.⁹² The G5 Sahel, with its slogan “security and development” seemed like an effective way for the EU to promote a security-development nexus on a longer-term timeline.⁹³ However, the G5 Sahel has largely abandoned its commitment to development, with the Joint Force mirroring the counter-terrorism focus of international partners such as France.⁹⁴ Concerns have been expressed about whether the G5 Sahel has a durable plan to stabilise the region or even whether it has decided which militias it opposes.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the EU still gave €50 million the G5 Sahel in 2017-18 and in 2018 pledged an additional €125 million.⁹⁶ This ‘obsession’ with promoting the G5 Sahel is damaging to the EU’s long-term ambition to promote security and development in Mali as intrinsically linked.⁹⁷ The G5 Sahel’s focus on counterterrorism and borders rather than on underlying development issues as root causes of instability highlights how the EU is often focused on Europe’s internal security rather than a tailor-made solution for stability in Mali.

Ultimately, many EU actors in Mali tend to see the security-development nexus as an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Personnel in the Commission became involved in security in a meaningful way when Mali transformed from a country where the EU purely focused on development efforts into a zone of instability where development tools were securitised. It is telling that, when questioned on the EUTF’s achievements, one interviewee highlighted that these were not the point: “We are constructing the European Union [through the EUTF]... in doing so, we are putting the EU in a position to be recognised as a security actor, which it was not four years ago.”⁹⁸ The strategic impact of tools is not always prioritised; the EU instead aspires to be taken seriously as a security actor. However, if the EU is to become a strategic actor it cannot proceed in this manner. Dismantling bureaucratic silos will not make

⁹² “The African Peace Facility”, African Union, retrieved 25 April 2019, <https://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/our-action/african-peace-facility>.

⁹³ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019.

⁹⁴ A. Lebovich, “Bringing the Desert Together: How to Advance Sahel-Maghreb Integration”, *ECFR Policy Brief*, no. 224, London, European Council on Foreign Relations, July 2017, p. 5.

⁹⁵ B. Venturi, “An EU Integrated Approach in the Sahel: The Role for Governance”, *IAI Papers*, no. 19, Rome, Istituto Affari Internazionali, 3 February 2019, p. 14.

⁹⁶ European Commission, “The European Union’s partnership with the G5 Sahel countries”, *Press Release*, 6 December 2018, Brussels, retrieved 30 April 2019, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-18-6670_en.htm.

⁹⁷ Lopez Lucia, “The European Union Integrated Approach”, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁹⁸ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019.

the EU a fully integrated crisis management actor if there is no strategic direction.⁹⁹ Real change has undoubtedly taken place, with synergies between security and development being created. Nevertheless, through the EU's *ad hoc* focus on migration and short-term security aims, an integrated approach in a strategic sense is lacking.

Together, synergies between civilian and military instruments and security and development instruments form the basis of the integrated approach. However, a crucial new element was brought to prominence through the integrated approach: integrating action at all phases of the conflict cycle.

Stabilisation, governance and the integrated multi-phased approach in Mali: What change, what added value?

The multi-phased aspect of the integrated approach is a key innovation made by the EUGS, and Mali has been a testing ground in the EU's efforts to integrate action at all stages of the conflict cycle. The stabilisation action under Article 28 TEU was set up to aid the Malians reconstruct their administration following an escalation of violence in the centre. Combined with EU attempts to integrate longer-term prevention initiatives to existing action, such as solving communal tensions that may lead to violence, it forms the basis of an integrated 'multi-phased' approach. Integrating action at all phases of a conflict was not a priority until the 2016 EUGS.¹⁰⁰ This set out an ambition for the EU to act:

at all stages of the conflict cycle. We will invest in prevention, resolution and stabilisation, and avoid premature disengagement when a new crisis erupts elsewhere.¹⁰¹

Stabilisation was a key focus within this area: "where the prospect of stabilisation arises, the EU must enable legitimate institutions to rapidly deliver basic services and security to local populations".¹⁰² A desire to act in fragile, immediate post-conflict

⁹⁹ M. Furness & S. Gänzle, "The Security-Development Nexus in European Union Foreign Relations after Lisbon: Policy Coherence at Last?", *The Development Policy Review*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2017, p. 467.

¹⁰⁰ G. Faleg, EU CIVCAP "Report on EU comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding", *EU-CIVCAP Report*, Deliverable 4.3, Rome, Istituto Affari Internazionali, March 2018, p. 54.

¹⁰¹ European Union, *Shared Vision, Common Action*, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

environments and to bridge this action with existing efforts such as longer-term development programmes is clear: “we will therefore seek to bridge gaps in our response between an end of violence and long-term recovery.”¹⁰³ Acting in a coherent manner at every phase of the conflict cycle pushes the EU further into the international security domain, developing its security actorness. This new aspect of the integrated approach is one of the most ambitious because it necessitates wider multi-phased synergies rather than simply synergies between sectors.

In this way, the idea behind Article 28 was to fill a gap by intervening in an immediate post-conflict stabilisation environment, a phase of the conflict cycle in which the EU was not usually involved.¹⁰⁴ The centre of Mali thus became a testing ground for the Article 28 programme. In a country with strong EU presence, the security situation had deteriorated by 2017 with an outbreak of jihadist violence in the centre, when most international peacekeeping efforts were focused on managing security in the north.¹⁰⁵ The HR/VP triggered Article 28 which led to the deployment of a group of 12 experts in governance, selected by the member states, to central Mali. These experts would help the local government rebuild administrative structures and improve the ability of Malian authorities to coordinate with each other. They would assist the Malian government implement PSIRC, the “Plan de Sécurisation Intégrée des Régions du Centre”, which was their answer to solving the crisis in the centre of Mali in the long run. PSIRC attempted an integrated approach, with four pillars: security, governance, development and strategic communication.¹⁰⁶

Article 28 was put into operation by PRISM, the principal structure for operationalising the EU’s multi-phased approach. The name PRISM itself “Prevention of Conflicts, Rule of Law/Security Sector Reform, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation” integrates phases of the conflict cycle that previously the EU saw as separate and time-limited. PRISM acted as a permanent working group for consultation on how to achieve an integrated approach, reporting to the Deputy

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Interview with a former EU political advisor, Geneva, 5 March 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019.

¹⁰⁶ N. Bagayoko, “Le processus de réforme du secteur de la sécurité au Mali”, *A Stabilizing Mali Project Report*, Centre FrancoPaix en résolution des conflits et missions de paix, Québec, Chaire Raoul-Dandurand en études stratégiques et diplomatiques Université du Québec à Montréal, February 2018, p. 60.

Secretary General for CSDP and Crisis Response.¹⁰⁷ In an effort to increase its visibility in EU structures, PRISM assumed its most significant role so far: operational control of the Article 28 stabilisation action (EUSTAMS) in Mali as a critical step in operationalising the multi-phased approach.¹⁰⁸

Expectations were high for EUSTAMS; EU officials deemed it “a great tool to operationalise the [EU’s] integrated approach”.¹⁰⁹ Some analysts even argued it had the potential to replace CSDP missions.¹¹⁰ Yet since its inception, EUSTAMS was hampered by strategic and operational problems. On the ground, Article 28 was not perceived as furthering the EU’s overall strategy: as one EU official argued: “no one knows what this thing did.”¹¹¹ The action put in place small programmes to stabilise the central region. For instance, working in Mopti and Ségou, the experts deployed by Article 28 established workshops for local lawmakers to help implement PSIRC and improve communication between regional and central governments.¹¹² However, the stabilisation action ended in early 2019, having achieved few concrete results in the centre of Mali. The failure of EUSTAMS tells a similar story about civil-military synergies and the security-development nexus in Mali. An effort was made to create institutional innovations, experimenting with a new instrument. Yet limited consideration was paid the role Article 28 should play in an overall strategy.

There were three key reasons EUSTAMS had a limited impact. First, echoing its problems of implementing PARSEC, the EU had not taken into consideration the severity of the security situation on the ground. Islamist attacks and intercommunal violence had increased, and in 2018 more than 300 civilians lost their lives in communal violence in central and northern Mali.¹¹³ The EU had underestimated security concerns in the centre which had been deteriorating for years and the security situation in Mopti and Ségou, where EUSTAMS was working, was far too fragile for post-conflict stabilisation to begin.¹¹⁴ Thus, the experts involved in EUSTAMS could

¹⁰⁷ T. Pietz, “Flexibility and ‘Stabilization Actions’: EU Crisis Management One Year After the Global Strategy”, *Policy Briefing*, Berlin, Centre for International Operations (ZIF), September 2017, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Lebovich, “Halting Ambition”, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹¹⁰ Pietz, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹¹¹ Interview with EU official 1, Brussels, 8 March 2019.

¹¹² Lebovich, “Halting Ambition”, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹¹³ “Mali Events of 2018”, *Human Rights Watch*, retrieved 8 April 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/mali#fd9013>.

¹¹⁴ Interview with EU official 1, Brussels, 8 March 2019.

not live in the centre and had to commute from Bamako.¹¹⁵ As a result, they had little contact with local government and civil society, and the experts worked with weak public administrations both in the regions and in Bamako.¹¹⁶ Moreover, a one-year mandate for the stabilisation action was insufficient time to implement reforms.¹¹⁷ The result was a top-down effort rather than a locally owned security-governance process.

Second, there were organisational difficulties in the implementation of the plan. Article 28 was driven by the HR/VP and controlled by the EEAS, a chance to expand the HR/VP's mandate to conduct security policy.¹¹⁸ However, the initiative lacked support from member states, existing staff in the CSDP missions and the EU Delegation. The function of the stabilisation action had not been adequately explained to these important actors. Member states lacked the same level of operational control they had over CSDP missions and were thus reluctant to recruit the experts needed for the mission. In a striking display of a lack of buy-in, only half of the experts needed were ever recruited by the member states.¹¹⁹ On the CSDP side, staff of EUCAP Sahel Mali were reluctant to help implement the plan as they believed it infringed on their own activities, and the relationship the stabilisation action should have with the CSDP missions was not clearly defined.¹²⁰ Furthermore, many at the EU Delegation were sceptical of the plan as they believed they did not have the resources to help the Article 28 team.¹²¹ There were frustrations with the way Article 28 was operationalised "in a top-down way".¹²² Thus, for an action that was supposed to epitomise the integrated approach – swift, decisive action being taken by a centralised authority (the HR/VP) – the result was instead the deployment of a team of experts detached from existing efforts, unable to draw on expertise in the field.

Yet particularly concerning were the diverging interpretations of EUSTAMS within the EU institutions. While those working on the ground were sceptical of the extent to which the action helped stabilise Mali at all, officials in Brussels showed a surprising disregard for the strategic impact of EUSTAMS. Some officials in Brussels did

¹¹⁵ Lopez Lucia, "The European Union Integrated Approach", *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹¹⁶ Interview with EU official 1, Brussels, 8 March 2019.

¹¹⁷ Lopez Lucia, "The European Union Integrated Approach", *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹¹⁹ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 3 April 2019.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Interview with EU official 1, Brussels, 8 March 2019.

¹²² *Ibid.*

not see Article 28's lack of concrete achievements in Mali as a failure, but a chance to learn in testing out a new EU external action tool.¹²³ They saw Article 28 in Mali as an end in itself as a way to learn lessons so the action could perhaps be used elsewhere in the future.¹²⁴ These diverging interpretations highlight the gap between the ambitions from Brussels to 'create' the EU as a security actor in Mali.¹²⁵ EUSTAMS's activation was not driven by needs on the ground, which clearly were not favourable, but a desire from Brussels to 'test' a new piece of institutional machinery.

Finally, the programme which Article 28 was mandated to help the Malian government implement, PSIRC, struggled to generate meaningful governance reform. Implementing the plan required stabilisation in the centre in response to a crisis, governance and building trust between communities, and a more long-term focus on economic projects.¹²⁶ Yet PSIRC was implemented by Mali's Ministry of Security and predominantly made recommendations concerning the deployment of Mali's security forces, rather than a whole-of-government approach. Its plans on strategic communication and engagement were limited, as was PSIRC's socio-economic reconstruction programme.¹²⁷ EUSTAMS had no mandate other than to help the Malian government implement PSIRC, even if the plan was myopic.¹²⁸ Thus, it was intrinsically limited in what it could achieve from the start.

The stabilisation action was supposed to be the showpiece of a new integrated multi-phased approach enacted through PRISM and EUSTAMS, however the EU lacked a long-term strategic plan behind the triggering of Article 28. One EU official was sceptical that EUSTAMS had achieved any strategic impact: "I'm not sure about the multi-phased approach. I think we have been running more after developments than anything else."¹²⁹ A lack of appreciation of the conditions on the ground led to poor strategic impact of the action. At the heart of the failure was a problematic attitude on the EU's part, viewing the security situation in Mali as a 'laboratory of experimentation'. Arguably the real motivation behind launching Article 28 was to try

¹²³ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 3 April 2019.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ See Lopez Lucia, "Performing EU Agency", *op. cit.*

¹²⁶ Venturi, "An EU Integrated Approach in the Sahel", *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹²⁷ Tobie, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹²⁸ For instance, Lebovich has highlighted that in the document 'justice' appeared only three times in the 46-page document, whereas 'security' appeared 98 times. Lebovich, "Halting Ambition", *op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹²⁹ Interview with EU official 1, Brussels, 8 March 2019.

out a new instrument rather than an action based on a clear-eyed assessment of the situation on the ground that would advance a coherent strategy for stability in the country. The hostility of other actors such as the EU Delegation is not a positive indicator that it was part of an integrated strategy. The Article 28 episode highlights the introspectiveness of the integrated approach in the country, tending to reflect the internal dynamics and institutional ends of the EU rather than the long-term stabilisation of Mali.

Returning to the criteria of success outlined in this paper, in the 'multi-phased' aspect of the integrated approach in Mali, the EU has achieved success in the first criterion, integrating tools and actors, without success with regard to the second criterion, improving the EU's ability to be a strategic security actor and effect the structural changes necessary to stabilise Mali.

Conclusion: The future of the 'laboratory of experimentation'

The first section of this paper referred to an EEAS working paper which summarised the EU's integrated approach to security in the Sahel:

The EU integrated approach is a new way of working which aims at setting a clear overarching EU political objective which can be achieved by using and combining the different tools at our disposal.¹³⁰

Tellingly, it was never articulated what precisely this overarching political objective is, nor did any of the interviewees agree on one.

Overall, how successfully and in what ways is the EU implementing an integrated approach to the conflict in Mali? It is clear that the EU has created meaningful institutional innovations, breaking down inter-agency silos particularly regarding the security-development nexus. However, these innovations were made in the absence of a clear set of strategic aims to unify CSDP missions, EUTF projects, other EU security and development instruments and EU member states. Institutional innovations such as Article 28 and the PARSEC programme are viewed as ends in themselves – testing new tools for use in future interventions and using Mali as a 'laboratory of experimentation' to construct itself as a security actor. The tools are utilised to serve short-term, migration-focused aims. This laboratory approach has

¹³⁰ European External Action Service, "The EU Integrated Approach in the Sahel", *op. cit.*, p. 2.

been prioritised over a sustainable strategy for the future of Mali.¹³¹ Ironically, the EU's most successful means of integrating the actions of EU agencies and actors, the EUTF, is also the most short-term and the least strategic, as an 'emergency' fund to curb migration to Europe.¹³² The EUGS put the slogan 'shared vision, common action' at the heart of its message. In the case of Mali, the latter is well on the way to being achieved, but without the former.

Mali remains one of the countries with which the EU is most engaged in terms of crisis management and SSR. There is thus a clear need for integrated strategic leadership or else there is a risk of a lack of coherence, with each agency or tool performing an individual task rather than working together to produce added value. Compared to the Horn of Africa, Mali is often used as an example of somewhere the comprehensive and/or integrated approach works well.¹³³ Yet we must ask at what cost the EU is experimenting with new inter-organisational and institutional synergies. As one EU official argued: "We have every single instrument in motion in Mali. Every time there is a new initiative, a new idea, we always pick Mali."¹³⁴ The EU's 'laboratory' for external action is situated in one of the most fragile, violent and conflict-stricken regions in the world. This is hardly an appropriate place for the EU to host experiments, particularly if programmes such as Article 28 make little progress towards achieving stability for the country.

This finding has implications for the analysis of EU action in conflicts beyond Mali. The EU is still in the process of developing its external action tools in fragile regions. In this sense, there will always be a danger that the EU will use external conflicts as opportunities to assert its presence as a security actor. The EUTF also operates in North and East Africa and is swiftly becoming an integral tool in EU foreign policy.¹³⁵ Yet whilst this fund undoubtedly creates synergies between actors in the implementation phase, it is an *ad hoc* method that operates outside of any EU integrated strategy. Further research on the integrated approach in other conflict zones where the EU

¹³¹ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 19 March 2019.

¹³² Conversation with a policy expert via telephone, 4 April 2019.

¹³³ N. Pirozzi, "The EU's Comprehensive Approach to Crisis Management", DCAF Brussels, EU Crisis Management Papers Series, June 2013, p. 15.

¹³⁴ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 8 March 2019.

¹³⁵ Kipp, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

engages, for instance Somalia, would be of interest to whether the findings presented here can be corroborated.¹³⁶

It is important to relativise the EU's failure in creating an overarching strategy. The security problems in Mali and the Sahel in general are intractable and deep-rooted. Dealing with the underlying causes of insecurity involves issues as complex as food insecurity, climate change, international organised crime networks, unemployment, demographic change and ethno-religious tensions.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the EU is dealing with a Malian state which still perpetuates the corruption that caused the unrest in 2012, and sees little incentive to undertake comprehensive SSR that would disrupt existing networks of power and patronage.¹³⁸ The EU cannot impose a change of approach against the will of the Malian government. Thus, when systematic change is so difficult to effect and drawing up a long-term strategy to tackle poor governance is politically sensitive, it may be understandable that the EU would choose to draw on existing strengths to implement short-term migration-focused projects that will be popular domestically with EU member states. This is more readily achievable than tackling the root causes of the conflict which include corruption and human rights abuses on the part of the Malian state.

However, using Mali as a 'laboratory' in which the EU can construct itself as an integrated security actor does not aid long-term stability in the country, particularly when the security situation, especially in the north and the centre of Mali, continues to deteriorate.¹³⁹ The integrated approach ultimately was intended in the EUGS as a means to an end – making the EU effective in crisis management – not purely as an end in itself to solidify the role of the EU as an integrated crisis manager. Thus, if the EU is serious about helping achieve long-term stability in Mali, it needs to create long-term, political, and structural objectives instead of an *ad hoc* projects approach.

¹³⁶ "Enhancing support for our external partners through the EU's Integrated Approach - EEAS Secretary General meets the civilian CSDP Missions", European Union External Action Service, 5 June 2019, retrieved 10 September 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/63683/enhancing-support-our-external-partners-through-eus-integrated-approach-eeas-secretary-general_en.

¹³⁷ Interview with an EU official, Brussels, 8 March 2019.

¹³⁸ Lebovich, "Halting Ambition", *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹³⁹ J.-H. Jezequel, "Centre du Mali : enrayer le nettoyage ethnique", International Crisis Group, 25 March 2019, retrieved 24 April 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/fr/africa/sahel/mali/centre-du-mali-enrayer-le-nettoyage-ethnique>.

Ultimately, this tension between the EU's desire to project itself as a security actor through integrated action in Mali (using the integrated approach as an end in itself) and using the integrated approach as a means to an end (to make the EU a more effective crisis manager) could be borne out of a contradiction at the highest levels of EU leadership. HR/VP Mogherini has argued that the EU should be "generously selfish" with regards to stabilising Africa,¹⁴⁰ and the EUSR to the Sahel, Ángel Losada, stated "the security in the Sahel is the security for Europe".¹⁴¹ This is further reinforced by the EU's 'internal-external security nexus'.¹⁴² Whilst these ideas highlight EU interests in the stability of the region, they do not facilitate the construction of a long-term strategic plan rooted in Malian needs.¹⁴³ Instead, these views encourage a short-term focus on issues directly affecting Europe such as terrorism and migration. The EU has, within the confines of counter-terrorism and migration management, has managed to break down institutional silos and experiment with new crisis management instruments. However, the EU needs to tackle the challenge that the integrated approach really presents: creating an EU that is capable of more than reactive responses, but can help effect lasting peace and resilient societies. Focusing on these needs rather than using short-term actions that superficially combat politically-salient issues in order to construct itself as a security actor is much more likely to prevent Mali from sliding into further instability in the future. It could also lend the EU far greater credibility if it chooses to intervene in conflicts in Africa in the future.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in M. Leonard, "Shaping Europe's Present and Future", Commentary, London, European Council on Foreign Relations, 11 January 2019, retrieved 2 May 2019, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_shaping_europes_present_and_future.

¹⁴¹ A. Van de Vijzel, "Closer Cooperation on Cross-border Issues: The EU Approach to the Sahel", *The Broker*, 26 January 2016, retrieved 13 April 2019, <http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Blogs/Sahel-Watch-a-living-analysis-of-the-conflict-in-Mali/Closer-cooperation-on-cross-border-issues-the-EU-approach-to-the-Sahel>.

¹⁴² "Speech of the HR/VP Federica Mogherini, "The EU Internal-External Security Nexus: Terrorism as an example of the necessary link between different dimensions of action", European Union External Action Service, 26 December 2015, retrieved 10 September 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/5535/speech-of-the-hrvp-federica-mogherini--the-eu-internal-external-security-nexus-terrorism-as-an-example-of-the-necessary-link-between-different-dimensions-of-action_fr.

¹⁴³ See Tardy, "The New forms of Civilian Crisis Management", *op. cit.*, p. 19.

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